

Modschiedler, Christa, and Bennett, Denise Beaubien, eds. **Guide to Reference in Medicine and Health**. Chicago, IL: American Library Association; 2014. 468 p. \$75.00. ISBN: 978-0-8389-1221-8. Also available as an e-book, \$60.00, ISBN: 978-0-8389-1983-5, or as a print and e-book bundle <<http://www.guidetoreference.org>> for \$88.00. ☺

This book is one of the “slices” off the veritable grand dame of reference books, *Guide to Reference*, which (alas) is no longer published as a single print entity even as its online presence slowly and unfortunately sunsets. Roger Ebert, the late beloved film critic, once said, “In my reviews, I feel it’s good to make it clear that I’m not proposing objective truth, but subjective reactions; a review should reflect the immediate experience.” I couldn’t agree more.

To say *Guide to Reference in Medicine and Health* looked formidable and proved to be even more so would be to understate the case. I roamed the pages, first with trepidation and then with growing awe. This tome, updated from the 2011 version, is a veritable treasure trove—a secret weap-

on for any medical librarian. This is a book for a librarian’s librarian, which I freely confess I am not.

Forgive me if this review has completely left the rails of sensible, prudent commentary, but I find I cannot be staid about such a resource. The depth and breadth of the content is impressive, the editors’ caveat that “the current edition cannot claim to be exhaustive in coverage” (p. xvii) notwithstanding. It certainly does fulfill its mission as a “repertory of sources as the foundation for reference and information services” (p. xi).

This guide may well prove vital for librarians new to the field, but it is valuable to all health sciences librarians. Where else can you find annotations for *The Food Safety Hazard Guidebook*, *The Dictionary of Health Economics*, *Quackwatch*, and *The Encyclopedia for Bioterrorism Defense* in one convenient place?

I wasn’t able to review the website along with the book, but they are good complements. The Medicine and Health portion of the website is as well organized as the print version. Be sure to check out the Editor’s Guides there, as they highlight the changes between print and online. Free trials of the online resource <<http://www.guidetoreference.org>> are available, and the online version will be freely available to all starting in 2016.

While I was bowled over by the expansive coverage in the book, I did note a few oddities. My advice to the reader is to review the table of contents prior to delving into the chapters; it provides the exoskeleton for this book. The chapters, in order, are on medicine, bioethics, consumer health, dentistry, health care (administration and economics are covered here), international and global health, medical jurisprudence, nursing, nutrition, pharmacology and

pharmaceutical sciences, psychiatry, public health, and toxicology, demonstrating the depth and breadth of this work.

Every chapter is laid out in straightforward subsections: guides, bibliography, library catalogs, classification, indexes, encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks, style manuals, histories, biography, statistics, illustrations, quotations, and Internet resources. Not all chapters have every element, but the same order of elements is used for all chapters, making the book efficient and cohesive. Even knowing this, the book still has confusing elements: each chapter starts with a short offering of seemingly random resources. This schema does not start generally and drill down specifically within the chapter's category. The work is not alphabetical, and it does not follow the National Library of Medicine classification schema. I do not see the inner logic to this format.

It may not be exhaustive, but it is a very solid foundation indeed, an impressive array of resources,

pertinent for both the clinician and the medical researcher. I am not aware of an equivalent compendium for purposes of comparison. Doody's Core Titles comes closest, but that is a compilation of books and software, and does not include online resources.

The strongest criticism I have is that sources behind paywalls are not designated as such. The editors in the introduction address this issue: "Selection criteria . . . [includes] sources that require purchase or licensing but are held at enough libraries to be reasonably available to reader of the Guide" (p. xii).

Perhaps denoting what is freely available online would at least warn the reader that not all resources are such. Again, this is a small point and one that may well be moot, since the target population is well aware of paywalls. My only other criticism is that the most appropriate vehicle for this resource is surely an online presence, not a print book (and I am a print advocate). I sincerely hope that the American

Library Association (ALA) rethinks their decision to sunset one of their best showcases.

This guide should be in every medical library, certainly in every hospital library. With this tool, every medical reference desk is well equipped to serve its diverse clientele.

To quote Ebert again, "Doing research on the Web is like using a library assembled piecemeal by pack rats and vandalized nightly." The good people at ALA have banished the pack rats, abolished the vandalism, and again assembled an excellent tool for all librarians to help their patrons benefit from a multiplicity of modern health care resources.

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